



2005
Governor's Public Safety Awards

*Dedicated to the men and women of the Georgia public safety community
in recognition of their Acts of Heroism, Outstanding Deeds and
Exemplary Performance that enhances their profession.*

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Governor of the State of Georgia
October 26, 2005

2005 Governor's Public Safety Awards Ceremony

Prelude

Air National Guard Band of the South

Welcome

*J. Dale Mann
Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center*

National Anthem

Kelli Gilstrap

Invocation

*Dr. Rick Lanford
Senior Chaplain for Homeland Security*

Introduction of the Governor

J. Dale Mann

Governor's Remarks

*The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Governor of the State of Georgia*

Award Honorees Presentation

The Honorable Sonny Perdue

Narration - Randy Travis, Fox 5 News

Dedication Prayer

Dr. Rick Lanford

Governor's Public Safety Awards Committee

J. Dale Mann, Chairman

Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Garry Moore

Georgia Bureau of Investigation

Tammy Walker

Georgia Emergency Management Agency

Courtney Terwilliger

Georgia Association of Emergency Medical Services

Gordy Wright

Department of Public Safety

Newton Maddox

State Board of Pardons and Paroles

Louis Dekmar

Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police

David Fowler

Prosecuting Attorney's Council

Ben Hinson

Mid-Georgia Ambulance Service



STATE OF GEORGIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
ATLANTA 30334-0900



Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR

To Our Honored Guests:

We are here this year to recognize the courageous efforts of the members of our public safety community who are on the front lines every day, protecting us from the many threats and dangers we face in this world.

The recent devastation of Hurricane Katrina has proven, even more so, how public safety professionals not only protect us, but are also the leaders in our community in times of crisis. The public safety community from all across our state was a key component in providing shelter and services for storm evacuees here in Georgia as well as in volunteering their services towards rescue and recovery efforts in our neighboring states. Their willingness to go beyond the call of duty is just another reason why we appreciate everything they do.

Where you find commitment, you will also find sacrifice. As you review the backgrounds and accounts of this year's recipients and nominees, please note their dedication and courage — either through acts of heroism or outstanding contributions to their given professions.

Once again, it is a privilege for me to help pay tribute to the contributions of these public safety professionals. They do reflect our society's most admirable virtues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonny Perdue".

Sonny Perdue

2005 Governor's Public Safety Awards Honorees

Names: Michael D. DeWald and O.J. Concepcion

Agency: DeKalb County Police Department

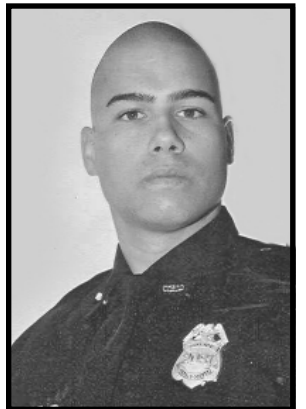
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

On March 29, 2005, Officers DeWald and Concepcion, with the DeKalb County Police Department responded to an apartment fire on Buford Highway. The top half of a ten-unit apartment building was fully involved in fire and billowed thick, black smoke. The officers were able to calm several residents trapped on a third floor balcony by speaking to them in Spanish. However, the officers were unsuccessful in their attempt to enter the building because of the flames and heavy smoke pouring through the front entrance. They ran back to the balcony where the situation was worsening. Residents began hanging over the edge of the balcony and out of windows to escape the flames, intense heat, and smoke. A mother was holding her baby over the edge of the balcony. Officer DeWald ran up to the balcony and the mother dropped the baby safely into his arms. After handing the baby to another resident who was assisting, he turned his attention to the other trapped residents. The officers ripped a gutter down spout from the building to use as an improvised slide. A pregnant woman lost her grip on the balcony railing as she tried to reach the gutter spout and fell. Officers DeWald and Concepcion leaped into the path of the falling woman and together caught her. As soon as they placed the woman in the care of others, a man climbed onto the railing of the balcony and jumped. Again without regard for themselves, Officers DeWald and Concepcion ran and caught the jumper. Both Officers were knocked to the ground, but prevented any major injury to the falling victim.

After they got everyone safely from the balcony, the officers entered the burning building. Despite breathing difficulties caused by the heavy smoke, they searched the downstairs apartments to make sure everyone was out. As a result of this selfless act, they located a resident who was unaware of the danger and directed him to safety. During this course of action, Officers DeWald and Concepcion became victims of smoke inhalation and were treated at the scene by EMS personnel. Officer DeWald required hospitalization and was later released without permanent injury. Their brave actions saved many of the residents from certain injury and possibly death.



Michael D. DeWald



O.J. Concepcion

2005 Governor's

Public Safety Awards Honorees



Name: Beth Gatny
Agency: Acworth Police Department
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

On June 2, 2005, Acworth Police Officer Beth Gatny and her partner, Officer William Yee, discovered a head-on collision on Nance Road in Acworth. Officer Gatny quickly extinguished the fire that began in the engine of one of the vehicles. Officer Yee broke a window and Officer Gatny crawled inside the car to assist the victims. The driver had been killed, but the passenger was still alive. Officer Gatny immobilized the passenger’s spine and stayed with her until EMS personnel arrived. The victim was evacuated by Life Flight. It was reported that the victim sustained spinal injuries and that Officer Gatny’s actions had saved her life and prevented possible paralysis.



Name: Blake Thompson
Agency: Wilkes County Emergency Medical Services
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

On April 1, 2005, Wilkes County EMS was called to respond to a multiple shooting in the rural town of Tignall, Georgia. EMS Director Blake Thompson responded and advised both arriving ambulances to stay clear of the residence as police had not yet arrived and the gunman had not been located. The only information available was that a mother, 3 months pregnant, and her 16 year old daughter had been shot. Shortly, officers arrived on the scene and were informed about the victims, who were now being held hostage. The suspect was armed with an AK47 and a semi-automatic pistol. While standing in the front door, he proclaimed that he would kill anyone who came near and then he would shoot the hostages.

Thompson saw the teenage girl jump out of a side window and disregarding his own safety, ran across the front yard to get her. She had been shot in the abdomen with a substantial entrance and exit wound. The shooter began threatening Thompson as he carried her across the road to safety behind a neighbor’s car. Thompson got the keys to the car from a bystander and then drove her past the house to a waiting ambulance. The gunman surrendered later and both victims recovered, however the mother lost the baby she was carrying. Due to Director Thompson’s selfless action in the face of an armed suspect, a badly wounded victim received the needed medical care.

2005 Governor's

Public Safety Awards Honorees

Name: Thomas Crawford III
Agency: Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

While traveling home on Interstate 16, the Friday evening of January 14, 2005, Special Agent Thomas Crawford and Georgia State Trooper Chris Rodewalt stopped to assist vehicles that had been forced off the road by a reckless driver. While Trooper Rodewalt assisted the motorist in one of the stopped vehicles, Agent Crawford approached another of the motorists and was told that a third vehicle had gone into the lake that bordered the Interstate. Agent Crawford, with the assistance of National Guardsman Tom Latimer, who had also stopped to help, entered the frigid water and pulled the two elderly occupants out the window of the car as it sank. Agent Crawford then placed the victims in a heated vehicle and provided blankets until EMS personnel arrived. Both victims survived this incident due to the quick and decisive actions of Agent Crawford.



Name: Laila Sabree
Agency: Atlanta Police Department
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

On August 25, 2004, Atlanta Police Officer Laila Sabree responded to a suspicious person call. A woman was using an ATM machine when she was approached by two individuals. The suspects attempted to rob her but fortunately she was able to get away, lock herself in her car, and call 9-1-1. When Officer Sabree arrived, the suspects, a male driver and a female passenger, were driving away from the scene. Officer Sabree attempted to stop the vehicle and a chase ensued. After the vehicle crashed into a tree, the suspect driver jumped from the car and began firing at Officer Sabree. She was struck in the left index finger and in the right hand. Although both hands received major injuries, Officer Sabree returned fire and killed the driver. She then subdued the passenger until backup officers arrived on the scene. Her actions, while injured and under fire, ended a violent situation that could have resulted in more tragic results.



2005 Governor's

Public Safety Awards Honorees



Name: Michael McKeithan
Agency: Gwinnett County Police Department
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

On October 2, 2004, officers with the Gwinnett County Police Department, received a call that a vehicle was traveling south in the northbound lanes of Interstate 85. Sgt. McKeithan, along with Officer C.A. Smith and Cpl. J. D. Smith, stopped northbound traffic on I-85 to prevent a high-speed head-on collision. After doing so, Officer Smith and Cpl. Smith proceeded north to stop traffic that might try to get on I-85 north at Beaver Ruin Road. They observed the violator traveling southbound at an estimated 80-90 MPH in the HOV lane approaching Sgt. McKeithan. Sgt. McKeithan, upon seeing the approaching car, edged his patrol car into the path of the speeding vehicle. The wrong-way driver hit the front fender of the patrol car sending it into a 360-degree spin backwards into a truck that was stopped in traffic. The accident halted the deadly threat of the wrong way, intoxicated driver without any loss of life. The entire incident lasted less than four minutes, requiring quick thinking and effective action as there was no time to deploy any other method of stopping the suspect to prevent a certain tragedy. Sgt. McKeithan risked his own life to protect innocent citizens.



Name: Brian Johnston
Agency: Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

On Thursday, May 5, 2005, Special Agent Brian Johnston was assisting the FBI and the Conyers Police Department on a fugitive/bank robbery investigation. Two fugitives had robbed a bank in Phenix City, Alabama, and shot a Columbus Police Officer during an attempted arrest. Information led officers to a motel in Conyers. While officers were preparing for a raid, one suspect attempted to escape in his vehicle. Agent Johnston used his vehicle to block the suspect's vehicle causing it to crash into his car. The armed suspect began a deadly gun battle with the officers and was shot and killed. The quick action by Agent Johnston prevented what could have been a high speed chase in a busy urban area by an armed gunman who had already demonstrated his determination to use deadly force to prevent capture.

2005 Governor's

Public Safety Awards Honorees

Name: Mary Price
Agency: Georgia Department of Corrections, Calhoun State Prison
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

Mary Price, a Correctional Officer at Calhoun State Prison, was on her way to work in the early morning hours of October 8, 2004. Outside of Damascus, she came upon an overturned utility truck. Ms. Price stopped her vehicle and ran to the truck. She discovered several passengers inside and a small fire that had started near the engine. She went back to her car, called 9-1-1 and gave the location of the accident. Ms. Price then returned to the truck, pulled one of the victims through a window and dragged him a safe distance from the vehicle. She was going back to the truck to rescue the other passengers when the fire ignited the diesel fuel tank and the truck exploded. The force of the blast knocked her backwards and resulted in the three remaining victims perishing in the fire. Distraught because she could not save the other passengers, Ms. Price nonetheless acted without regard for her own safety to save the life of the driver.



Names: Kevin Moran, Jerry Stancel and Doug Mattox
Agency: Gwinnett County Police Department
Award Recognition: Act of Heroism

Lt. Moran, Sgt. Stancel, and Sgt. Mattox are officers with the Gwinnett County Police Department. On April 24, 2005, a disturbed Hispanic male had climbed over the guardrail on Pleasant Hill Road over I-85 and was sitting on the small ledge with his legs dangling over the traffic. The call was dispatched and Lt. Kevin Moran was the first officer on the scene. Upon his arrival, Lt. Moran saw that the man was confused and did not speak English. Fortunately a Hispanic citizen had stopped when he noticed the man sitting on the ledge and helped translate for Lt. Moran. Sergeants Stancel and Mattox then arrived and the three officers formulated a plan to attempt a rescue. Lt. Moran approached the suspect and grabbed him from behind while Sergeants Stancel and Mattox grabbed each one of the man's arms. After a brief struggle, they were able to bring him back over the guardrail and subdue him. The subject was transported to an appropriate facility for mental evaluation. These officers risked their lives to save this disturbed man and cleared up a very hazardous situation without injury.



**Kevin
Moran**



**Jerry
Stancel**



**Doug
Mattox**